

***Speech Acts;* Emergent Issues in Wide-Scope**

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I. Introduction

J. L. Austin, P. F. Strawson, and John R. Searle are owed a great deal of credit in providing an adequate foundation and methodology from which we could respond to logical positivism and the theses of the Vienna Circle. Philosophy and the contemporary (cognitive) linguistic communities of academe have greatly benefited from the analytic work that came out of Oxford in the mid-twentieth century. Today, I'm not sure that it's possible to study any introductory textbook in linguistics without at the same time becoming acquainted with their contributions. My contention, however, is that most of the analyses on this topic have been executed by way of utilizing schemas that focus on *isolated bits* of conversation, i.e., de-contextualized idealizations and null-point fragments of either the most rudimentary occurrences, or frameworks contrived for specific ends. In Ricoeur's words, it is the "contextual function of discourse to screen, so to speak, the polysemy of our words and to reduce the plurality of possible interpretations"¹. Deeper socio-linguistic complexities, such as might be described in one way or another, analogous to what Davidson calls, "passing-theories²," are often consolidated or tailored—becoming necessary sacrifices for the illocutionary template. Searle defers a great deal of explanation to areas that demand further scrutiny; some of which should figure into a much larger conceptual role, or should themselves be integrated into the forefront of the speech-act treatise. E.g., to name a couple, the "background³ (which has always been a reluctantly-accepted, yet slightly embarrassing area for analytic philosophers)" and the relevance of certain forms of social and customary behavior. For the most part the obvious pragmatism in speech act theory may very well outlast its propositional value. But,

¹ Ibid. pp. 17.

² Davidson, Donald. *Philosophical Grounds of Rationality*, ed. Richard Grandy and Richard Warner (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), pp. 157-174.

³ "The Background is a set of nonrepresentational mental capacities that enable all representing to take place." Searle, John R. *Intentionality, an Essay in the Philosophy of Mind*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983. p.143.

this “usefulness” becomes incidental if that paradigm veils or precludes the possibility of incorporating, or discovering, significant aspects and realities inherent to linguistic behavior. In this paper I hope to extend the parameters of the theory to account for the movement of speech acts in dialogical domains (a term I’ll soon introduce); to apprehend rich gestalts and vast economies of speech phenomena that have yet-to-be explored. A sociology of speech acts, in a manner of speaking, is necessary—examining the exchanges and natural relations of interplay. Consequently, this approach will raise new questions. Can *emergent’ structures* of speech manifest through certain combinations of collective assemblage? Can the semantic autonomy of one speech act become affected or shift via the interaction it has with other speech acts and further interactions? How do Gricean “maxims” and Searlean “principles of cooperation” and “relevance” vary or subsist in broader contextual environments? *A great deal of this essay will be directed at unveiling perlocutionary acts and effects as playing a much larger and distinct semantic role in discourse. It is my hypothesis that we can account for emergent gestalts in wide speech-act domains in a way that the current, analytic literature has yet to illustrate; e.g., that something resembling a macro-level, parametric-perlocutionary-background effect is achievable, via the interaction of speech acts (themselves) working in a collective body or network that produces a direct impact on the illocutionary project altogether (something we’ll touch on later). I hope to illustrate these potentialities, and much more, in the following inquiry.*

II. Brief Overview of Indirect Speech Acts

A speaker says one thing, means what he says, and yet, means something completely different at the same time. This unavoidable peculiarity in explanation, itself, reveals what is most central to the issue at hand concerning indirect speech acts. Its very definition, taken from John R. Searle’s analysis, begs the question: how can one mean something and not mean something at the same time? Or, mean something more or entirely otherwise from what is stated—concurrently—without

⁴ A term often employed in the biological sciences and the philosophy of mind; used to denote a property of classification in which an object is equal to more than the sum total of its parts given a particular association or arrangement.

stating it as such? Here's how it works. Searle's famous example—"Can you pass the salt?"—has the *literal* illocutionary force of a query; specifically, it asks a question regarding whether or not someone *can* perform a certain action: e.g., "are you *able* to pass the salt?" But there's another level of semantic understanding, on part of the hearer, which uncovers a dissimilar, latent, ulterior meaning—and additionally interprets *that* meaning to be a speaker's primary intention; i.e., in the *table-etiquette example*, the "directive" (!↑W(H does A))⁵ is perceived to be the *primary* illocutionary point ("Pass the Salt!"). Somehow, and without recourse, we accurately and successfully respond to the non-literal meaning of this speech act. We pass the salt, despite the fact that a directive was absent from the actual utterance. Inversely, a response to the secondary literal meaning has an intriguing consequence: "Certainly I am physically capable of passing the salt!" A reply of this sort, one might recognize, is tantamount to the methods employed in comedy (e.g., sitcoms, rom-com, stand-up, etc.). The audience perceives an irony in which what is uttered is, technically, an adequate response, but simultaneously fails what is anticipated and intended by the meaning of the speaker; therefore, a response to the literal illocution is infelicitous. Even more perplexing, what is said is not adequate and what is conveyed somehow is. The utterance is not a matter of falsity, but a failure to grasp the appropriate context or *background* of conversation that underpins the actual meaning of the speech act. The philosophical problem can then be stated as follows: "How does [the hearer] understand the non-literal primary illocutionary act from understanding the literal secondary illocutionary act? And that question is part of the larger question, How is it possible for [the speaker] to mean the primary illocution when he only utters a sentence that means the secondary illocution, since to mean the primary illocution is (in large part) to intend to produce in [the hearer] the relevant understanding?"⁷ We can describe the underlying form of the issue systematically using Searle's notation from *Speech Acts* and his taxonomy of illocutionary acts compiled in *Expression and Meaning*, which allows for us to separate the

⁵ Searle, John R. *Expression and Meaning: Studies in the Theory of Speech Acts*. Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 1979. p.36.

⁶ *Ibid.* Refer to the taxonomy of illocutionary acts in chapter one for more clarity on symbolization; specifically, psychological state, direction of fit, point, force, propositional content, etc. p.1

⁷ *Ibid.* Searle. *Expression and Meaning*. p.34.

propositional content from the illocutionary force indicating device ($F(p)$)⁸:

?(*pass the salt*)

!(*pass the salt*)

Another way in which we commonly encounter indirect speech acts is in this form:

P₁: “*Let’s go see Macbeth tonight!*”

P₂: “*I have to return some videotapes.*”

The interesting point here is that P₁ unambiguously interprets the utterance of P₂ to be a negation of the proposal. How does he know this is a rejection when in virtue of its meaning it suggests nothing more than a statement?

The answer Searle offers (paraphrased as least pedantically as possible), based on his theory of *Speech Acts*, is that both parties are operating under assumed principles of *conversational cooperation* and *relevance* in conjunction with *factual background information*. On this model P₁ assumes that P₂ is in cooperation with the conversation and that his response must be relevant to his primary illocutionary point—in this case, a proposal. Since one cannot “return some videotapes” and “see Macbeth” at the same time (factual background information), P₁ is able to reasonably infer one illocutionary point from another; i.e., an inference is made from the secondary literal meaning to the primary non-literal meaning. Consequently, the initial speaker understands that his request has been rejected.

III. Extending Over the Domain in an Extended Case

In contradistinction to something resembling Searle’s analysis, let’s interrogate a *wide conversation* in its entirety (what we’ll soon refer to as a “domain”):

Example a.

A female union delegate answers a phone and a superior speaks on the other end—

P₁: “*Good morning, Pam! Remember, regarding those letters, the courier always leaves at noon. Looks like we’re going to meet our projections.*”

P₂: “*Very well, Sir.*”

⁸ Ibid. Searle. *Speech Acts*. Force and propositional content symbolization first introduced. p.31.

This template can be further transcribed in the following notation:

P: $E\emptyset(p)(S/H+\text{property}), !\uparrow W(H \text{ does } A), \vdash \downarrow B(p)$

P: $E\emptyset(p)(S/H+\text{property})^9$

Notice, that the middle illocutionary act has already been converted to its notational classification to represent its non-literal primary form. It's an assertive, a statement of fact, but yields as primary its intended meaning as a directive (reflected in P). So it seems, this middle expression is the only indirect speech act uttered by the speaker on the other side of the telephone. "Good morning, Pam!" is an expressive; "Looks like we're going to meet our projections" is merely another assertive.

Where does this leave us in interpreting P:? Is "Very well, Sir" merely a customary, parting expression, such as "goodbye"? Let's assume that the necessary background information has been established prior to this dialogue. Suppose a day earlier Pam had drafted reports which were intended to be delivered to a specified business in a short interval of time; further, that these documents are both familiar and significant to both parties involved. Pam, therefore, understands the second illocution in the conversation to be more than a mere matter-of-fact statement; she understands a latent meaning that is intended to commit her to a course of action. In this context, P. makes a directive illocutionary point $!(p)$ by way of an assertive utterance $\vdash(p)$ (which states no more than "such-and-such is the case"). Does Pam, in virtue of some indirect directive, *mentioned earlier* in the discussion, find herself inherently committed to a specified action? Or, could "Very well, sir" simply be a recognition or agreement of that last illocution: "Looks like we're going to meet our projections!?" *Difficulty arises once we leave the arena of micro-level speech acts (sentences, for the most part) and reroute our focus to problems in broader discourse. So, the issue of bound-response seems to be the first unfamiliar problematic encounter we are forced to deal with.* It seems dubious to imagine that a non-negative response, such as "Very well, sir" would be indicative of assigning a unilateral "Yes" to all illocutions in the conversation. How do we know that this reply is anything but a total expressive (e.g., "goodbye"), even independent of the entire

⁹ Ibid. *Expression and Meaning*. p.1-29. For more on the notation.

context, relating to nothing other than its inherent meaning? And yet, one can easily infer that were P_2 to avoid the courier, P_1 would cite this conversation as an acknowledgment and an agreement. It's the agreement part that we are trying to explain. Pam could respond in the literal: "I heard you. But I did not agree. 'Very well, Sir'—you're right about the arrival time of the courier; however, regarding those documents, they will not be finished in time. And you never asked?" This is a felicitous response, given the local background of the work environment. So, "Very well, Sir" in virtue of this contingency extends the conversational domain. But how do we pin down the exact machinery in play within discourse? Imagine a situation with an even larger set of illocutionary acts. How would we determine such a case? Would we not be delineating and drawing up parameters simply to suit our own purposes—isolating fragments for our own philosophical project? *So how is it that (Pam's superior) P_1 recognizes "Very well, Sir" to be a positive response to his earlier directive and not merely a response to his last utterance?*

Assume we replace the propositional content of the middle expression to, "The courier needs a bullet in the head by noon." Obviously, no matter what is uttered between the end of this sentence and the end of the conversation, a failure to address the directive is somehow intuitively suggestive of "Very well, Sir" being a positive acknowledgment that refers to *that* illocution (and commits the speaker to the action described). In this case, we cannot seem to shake off the gravity of the earlier utterance, despite whatever is uttered subsequently. Pam's response is in an invariable relation to the indirect speech act. But how is it possible for one illocution to extend across the conversation and render the expressions before and after itself obsolete? What underpins this power?

First hypothesis: The hearer will perceive *as primary*, and response-demanding, the illocutionary point of the most highly constrained utterance; i.e., the most binding expression for H. (This will be pertinent later in explaining how a response to S can be "bound" to a specific utterance within a conversational "domain.")

Even further, an utterance that has conditions of satisfaction entailing the hearer cannot be ignored. Even the act of ignoring signifies a response—an indirect negation, as described above in the Macbeth example. A situation where one asks one to promise illustrates this point: "Do you promise to do A?" Any response is a rejection that is not near-commissive, unless clearly defined

in some other way: “Only if such-and-such is the case additionally” or, “If I can...I will...”, etc. Now, what if Pam were to only respond to the last statement regarding market projections? In this case, her superior either perceives this to be: a positive acknowledgement (e.g., something similar to “Of course, it goes without saying!”); or a negation by way of refusing to recognize the speaker’s intent; or, Pam shifted her focus and needs to be reminded thrice.

Second hypothesis: Only an illocutionary act of equal or greater constraint on the hearer could supplement our current middle-term and extend across the conversational domain analogous to the directive we’re interrogating.

“I ordered roses last Monday and they’re still not on my desk.”

Even in the event that this assertive is false, and the hearer knows this (e.g., say Pam is aware that they arrived late Friday, before last weekend and died before he came in on Monday morning), we would not be suspicious of her response possibly meaning more than what is stated in the expressive. If we ignore an assertive we are not bound to its agreement or negation.

Example b.

P: “*Good morning, Pam! I ordered roses last Monday and they’re still not on my desk. Looks like we’re going to meet our projections.*”

P: “*Very well, Sir.*”

“Very well, Sir” does not appear to be in itself binding to the assertive as a response—not in the same way that it was bound to the former directive; however, if we shift the pre-intentional background a little, and say, P_i intends to request information !(p) by way of asserting a state of affairs ⊢(p) (this is based on the background assumption that Pam normally informs her superior of all matters concerning incoming mail as well), we can enrich this wholly distinct utterance with the same unilateral power of the former directive; and the utterance with the same propositional content, which could not extend further than itself, is now capable of doing so under a different illocutionary force !(p). If the superior is making a request about the flowers, Pam’s response, “Very well, Sir”, is just as binding as the request for the mail. But only if we shift the assertive regarding the flowers to a directive as well; furthermore, it is not necessarily the directive that is unique, but the conditions constraining the illocutionary act that involve the hearer; namely, the

essential condition of the utterance—that it *counts as an attempt to get H to do A*. A question, for example, can equally have this effect because it is a “subclass of directives, since they are attempts by S to get H to answer, i.e. to perform a speech act”. A commissive, for example, is only constraining on the speaker: $C \uparrow I(S \text{ does } A)$; therefore, it would have nearly the same ineffective, unbinding power on “Very well, Sir” as an assertive. It can be ignored by H without implying negation or opening any inferential consequence for S. It appears that this demonstration coheres with our hypothesis: *Only an illocutionary act of equal or greater constraint on the hearer could supplement our current middle-term and extend across the conversational domain analogous to the directive under interrogation*. Therefore, the most constrained speech acts, which involve actions to be undertaken on part of the hearer, can unilaterally override the domain.

IV. Destabilizing the Subordinated Literal Meaning & Other Hierarchies

In this case, “Very well, Sir” is simultaneously an agreement that the flowers never arrived and that she’ll see to the matter [$\neg(p)$ & $!(p)$]. Pam is inexplicably tied to the secondary literal meaning of the indirect speech act as well; the secondary illocutionary point. Ordinarily, and as we saw earlier, a response to the literal illocutionary point is “infelicitous¹⁰”; in certain contexts, the failure to acknowledge the privileged intention is what underpins comedy. And yet, in this example what is expected is a confirmation or denial of the state of affairs reported in the literal assertive. Because information was not obtained, Pam’s superior must infer that *there is no evidence to the contrary* (that she knows of) or *it would have been shared* (this is the bit of local background information needed to ground P_1 ’s response to P_2 ’s hypothetical felicity-error response). Aside from the latent request, we are also dealing simultaneously with a query: this means that we have two separate secondary illocutionary points (*assertive* and *query*). However, Searle never really goes into much detail at this junction and will be of little help. He simply testifies to the fact that illocutionary acts can have more than one classification from the taxonomy. And, what little information we have on indirect speech acts does not deal with more than two illocutionary points at a time. In contradistinction to his methodology, I feel that much is lost in a failure to extend the analysis and

¹⁰ From Austin, *felicity* signifies the fulfillment or non-fulfillment in cooperation with speaker meanings.

take the depth of the systematicity for granted. For example, the case we've just described depicts a scenario under which the hearer responds not only to the latent directive, but to the secondary assertive and the *implied* question. Indirect speech acts observe a dependence on part of the hearer to make an inference to the primary non-literal meaning, but here, we have a case where what is demanded in the *secondary* is of equal importance—without primacy—and, so too, is the *implied* question. If the significance of the non-literal meaning of the speech act can be subordinated to the literal—what consequence does this have for the theory of indirect speech? Does Searle not require a rudimentary, clearly delineated dichotomy in hierarchy to manage his concise explanations? It's usefulness is in question here...

Firstly, if we put aside any presumption of correspondence (e.g., truth-value assertions world-to-word/word-to-world), and step back from the question of Searle's theory being an accurate representation (1:1 ratio) or not—there is some revealing pragmatic significance. Our ability to destabilize the non-literal/literal dichotomous hierarchy begs the question of necessity and contingency. However, it might be the case that skepticism in regard to the theories' correspondence is misleading. *The preferred question should be: why was this move important?* We've been able to refer to quite a bit of ambiguity in Searle's interpretation: an open understanding of the "background" (e.g., customary/cultural inclinations) and the classification techniques of illocutionary acts in general. But there remains a tremendous amount of *usefulness* in this dichotomy. The argument favors the primacy of a singular, overriding or overarching meaning to make sense of the speaker's intention; a vehicle to express what is not expressed. This likely accounts for the position's intuitive appeal: e.g., I say one thing and I mean something else. Although it would be—equally—dubious to mistake this commonsense and pragmatic appeal to be all that is the case. Rather, it is useful so long as it does not preclude further inquiry or veil deeper realities of indirect speech. *Here begins my "primary" issue with Searle's analysis.*

The apparent pragmatism is relatively palpable while we follow examples involving mutually distinct illocutionary points. Why does he never discuss, or even offer a brief exposition of, indirect speech acts which possess two identical illocutionary points?

Example c.

P: "This morning the coffee was not on my desk."

Ordinarily, we should assume that there is a latent meaning underpinning this speech act. The first secondary illocutionary point being the literal assertive, which merely reports that “such-and-such” is the case: $\vdash(p)$. In order for this to cohere with the logic of the Searlean approach, it seems necessary that we uncover an alternative, non-literal illocutionary point that the hearer can discover through inference. E.g., “In the future—deliver my coffee on time, Pam!” Here we have a clear primary-secondary-dichotomy with the introduction of a future request or directive. So much seems dependent on this schema, and we should be skeptical as to what degree we fit linguistic reality into this template. Are we tethered too much to its parameters? *For example, it might be the case that, in this instance, positing a primary future request is not only veering too far away from P_1 's actual intentions, but that we preclude ourselves from discerning something fundamental to this illocution altogether.* It is equally possible that P_1 primarily means to “reprimand” and not direct the hearer to a course of action—i.e., “You failed to deliver my coffee”. In this instance:

“*This morning the coffee was not on my desk.*” $\vdash(p)$.

“*You failed to deliver my coffee.*” $\vdash(p)$.

Both illocutionary acts have distinct meanings, noted in their propositional content, and yet possess the same illocutionary point and force. Is not the verb, “to reprimand,” just as semantically relevant to the asserting of the state of affairs described by P_1 as any other inference? Why would we immediately assume that a directive could be the only supplement, unless our aim was to merely satisfy the constraints of the Searlean model? For the sake of clarity, let's place P_1 in a specific pre-intentional background and examine the situation anew:

- *P_2 has formerly been instructed to deliver P_1 's coffee before 9:00am, Monday through Friday.*
- *9:00am is when P_1 arrives to work.*
- *Since her first day of employment P_2 has always carried out this act, Monday through Friday, until today.*
- *P_1 would prefer P_2 to have carried out this expected act to her not carrying out this act.*

For P_1 it is very likely that the purpose of representing the state of affairs (the absence of an object) is an expression of *irritation*. Intrinsic to reporting the scenario, given the specific background-

context, we have, by extension, an implication of a “failure to perform” on part of P_2 . A request signifies the significance of the future and subtracts the inherent value-judgment involved in P_1 's utterance involving the present. *So, if we accept that both illocutionary points are assertive, which is primary and which is secondary?* $\vdash(p)$ or $\vdash(\neg p)$? Does it even make sense to form this query? The other assertive we were able to elucidate, “You failed to deliver my coffee,” was semantically intact, by extension, given the background-context. Speech acts are never formed in a null or ground-zero context, which is why analyzing these structures in isolated bits fails to incorporate instances such as these—where the two assertive illocutionary points are not contradictory, but the notion of binary-hierarchy is either non-applicable or superfluous. Therefore, we have ample reason to maintain our skepticism of Searle's schema in regard to its capacity, breadth and scope in capturing the movement of indirect speech.

V. Illocutionary Acts as Variables in a Wide Domain

Consider a case under which this theory would (not necessarily) be non-applicable (but not useful). E.g., one that might require something altogether different, methodologically, to capture a large array of meanings in indirect speech. Now, we must begin to construct, what will be, the fulcrum of this project, i.e., the movement of speech acts and indirect speech acts as we've yet to conceive; that is inclusive of greater contexts and resembles more closely—our experience of this linguistic capacity in general.

We are all familiar with a kind of conversation that tacitly includes misdirection. These cases often rely on idioms, which are motivated (according to the contemporary literature) by customary behavior. One example is what we colloquially refer to as, “softening the blow.” Prior to informing the hearer of something particularly serious or emphatically concerning, the speaker will utter *irrelevancies* such as, “You look really handsome this evening. How about ‘em Dodgers?—I hit a stop sign on my way home with your new car.” Undoubtedly, we are led to believe that all expressions preceding the last speech act are *incidental*. More importantly, that these speech acts only exist to further the intent of the last locution. But how would we represent a situation like this

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in the taxonomy?

Consider this case:

Example d.

P₁: *“Molly and I attended the fair over the weekend. I promise you, if you come next year, Pam, you won’t regret it. Ah, it’s been a long morning already. So, I talked to Human Resources this morning and I cannot clear you for maternity leave for the amount of time you requested.”*

P₂: *“I’ll be speaking to my union rep. Have a nice day.”*

We are somewhat familiar with an interpretation of a dialogue that is, for the most part, intentionally incidental. P₁ can be identified as such a circumstance. Everything preceding the last line is of no significance to P₂ by the domain’s end; we may even assume that everything preceding its end (and ‘end’) is, equally, of no importance to the speaker. What remains to be explored is the way in which the last assertive illocution extends the linear dialogue (from before its presence to its completion). But, how exactly does this “parametrical relation¹¹” occur, which hums like the “tempo in a Bach allegro” throughout? S unilaterally fails to hide the emphatic effect; his attempt at hiding it amidst the mundane and inconsequential does not work. We might be tempted to simply resolve the situation by saying that S, by failing “sincerity conditions,” and other inherent conditions on each individual utterance—those speech acts default and simply become void. *Left remaining is the only sincerely intended speech act, which is how we account for its primacy.* But is there not more to these ineffectual speech acts, which prelude the primary utterance? Do they not, in S’s vain attempt, perform the opposite function—by circumscribing and instantiating that same emphasis S attempts to hide. The hiding becomes part of the illuminating power of the final assertive in example d. We then remain in doubt regarding the possibility of a simply answer, such as: the final assertive extends the scope in light of the failure of the surrounding locutions. *What is significant is not a psychological process of elimination (taken up by H), but the positive, effectual nature of the parametric-perlocutionary effect on the entirety of the domain.* This question has yet-

¹¹ From, Barthes, Roland, and Stephen Heath. *Image, Music, Text*. New York: Hill and Wang, 1977. p. 95. In which an element remains constant throughout the whole duration.

to-be raised because we’ve never analyzed the width of a “domain” (only isolated bits).

Let’s begin with what we know—and build from there.

The illocutionary force and propositional content have been distinguished in the form (as demonstrated earlier) $F(p)$. We can therefore discern an indirect speech act, such as, “Can you pass the salt?” by representing the literal secondary utterance as $?(p)$ and the primary non-literal utterance as $!(p)$. This is extremely useful, but we were also never provided a notation to express their relationship (which, in our analysis, will prove useful). Let’s use the absolute value symbol (denoted as the “primary value” here) to indicate the linear distance of secondary meanings from primary meanings, which is the distance from itself under different and differing aspects. We can then express the relationship between two distinct illocutionary points in the indirect speech act, while at the same time accounting for the primary/secondary binary hierarchy:

$$|?(p)|!(p).$$

In reference to our analysis, we must determine how to handle the case of a whole individual’s dialogue in the context of a conversation.

Let us refer to the entire dialogue within the parameters of the braces as a “domain.” Additionally, let the individual speech acts be divided into unit-components, which we’ll call “variables.” Therefore, example d. can be expressed as such:

$$P_1 = \{\downarrow B(p), C\uparrow I(S \text{ does } A), E\emptyset(p)(S/H+\text{property}), \downarrow B(p)\}; \text{ or, } P_1 = \{\alpha, \beta, \gamma, \delta\}$$

$$P_2 = \{\downarrow B(p), E\emptyset(p)(S/H+\text{property})\}; \text{ or, } P_2 = \{\alpha, \beta\}^{12}$$

In our case (example d.) we seem to be dealing with the intention of a paradoxical kind—to veil and, at the same time, assert. The speaker is disinterested in the illocutionary points of the other variables. His intent is with the propositional contents—the information that is presented is merely *other* than (a distraction from) the propositional content in the last illocutionary act: “So, I talked to Human Resources this morning and I cannot clear you for maternity leave for the amount of time you requested.” So it seems that we’re hypothetically left with a logical tree structure¹³, i.e., in which a unitary apex houses a contingent substructure from which it extends.

¹² These simple domain structures will take on greater complexity once we discuss their properties: “domain points,” “bound variables,” etc.

¹³ Whereas our analysis will conclude in a rhizomorphic structure.

Nonetheless, we must answer a simple, hypothetical, analytic objection; something of an argument from substitution. For our picture to work it would seem that we should be able to supplement any one of our variables—and assume its conveyance of the *primary domain point*. But how can the commissive in our braces, for example, be used to express the *illocutionary point* of the last assertive? How could we use that propositional content to mean something entirely different? Indirect speech acts allow for us to understand latent intentions, but this appears to be a stretch. Can all these speech acts, integrally, really be used to convey $\vdash \downarrow B(p)$? In fact—this line of reasoning is misguided. In cases of indirect speech acts, we could not have the same expectations as we do in *indirect discourse* in *dialogical domains* (as I will soon demonstrate). Where we've actually arrived...somewhere in the midst of a problem concerning a contrast between the *illocutionary* and *perlocutionary*.

VI. Perlocutionary Effects and Constraint

It is a matter of fact that the statement, “Molly and I attended the fair over the weekend,” is either true or false (he and Molly either did or did not attend) independent of the attitudes the speaker might have toward that utterance. Despite S's primary concern in effecting H in a specific way via that utterance in no way exempts the inherent conditions of the assertive speech act. However, once S completes his dialogue (in example d.), H also recognizes the ulterior motive of all speech acts preceding the final assertive. H infers that the sincerity conditions might not maintain (if H has any regard for the preceding locutions at all); the intent was never to convey something meaningful about the fair or otherwise. The matter was entirely *perlocutionary* to some semantic extent (“to what degree” is the issue). The intent then becomes a binary matter for both S and H. Logically, S is committed in some way to the literalism despite this mutual recognition, but we still have a clear issue of indirection/misdirection. Is it possible to define example d. in terms of indirect speech, which by definition, is a matter of simultaneously meaning two distinct illocutionary points—e.g., requesting one to act by way of query? Searle would never regard a speech act's perlocutionary effect as, in-itself, an ulterior illocutionary point:

“If we could get an analysis of all (or even most) illocutionary acts in terms of perlocutionary effects, the prospects of analyzing illocutionary acts without reference to rules would be greatly increased. The reason for this is

that language could then be regarded as just a conventional means for securing or attempting to secure natural responses or effects. The illocutionary act would then not essentially involve any rules at all. One could in theory perform the act in or out of a language, and to do it in a language would be to do with a conventional device what could be done without any conventional devices.¹⁴

I agree with this point, as well as Searle's argument against the Gricean theory of meaning. We cannot reduce meaning to the intended effect on the hearer without reducing essential elements of meaning that undermine the rule governed nature of language in general. However, in this example we seem to be dealing with "perlocutionary-intended utterance acts," which, themselves, are not indirect speech acts (undoubtedly), because they do not individually mean more than they suggest. *But, as I will argue, conceived in the context of larger conversational intervals (as in the domain of a dialogue), speech acts seem to have the potentiality of interacting integrally to drive an ulterior agenda of indirect discourse which is, in this case, essentially and latently perlocutionary.*

The illocutions we're examining create the immediate-background under which the last assertive is executed (whether it fails its perlocutionary intention or not) in a parametric milieu. No single illocutionary act can be stripped of its sincerity or felicity conditions to merely affect a unique immediate-background for other utterances—but several, in a particular assemblage—may achieve this end. Example d. is an illustration of a momentary attempt to control the psychological state of the hearer; to color her world prior to the reception of the perlocutionary effect of a particular speech act. The desire for S is that $\vdash \downarrow B(p)$ will be tampered-down; that the linear-mundane path will remain intact in continuous flow. But the break (revelation of the façade) is nearly inevitable. And once this break occurs, S's intent is open for H. Collectively, each of the speech acts inside this domain (not including the last locution) seem to be expressions of a psychological state: "I am sorry that I have to tell you this,"¹⁵ or, "I feel guilty..." which is discernable through the late discovery of irrelevance. Both S and H understand this fact, and by the time H fully comprehends $\vdash \downarrow B(p)$, this opens the awareness of S's ploy; the expressive intent becomes unilaterally realized. Given the constraint on indirect speech acts, specifically, that both parties assume relevance ("Step

¹⁴ Searle, John R. *Speech Acts*. p.71.

¹⁵ Norrick argues for a position that allows for a larger class of expressives. In this case, P₁ might be classified as an "apology," for delivering disheartening news.

2” in Searle’s analysis¹⁶), H is able to reasonably infer the latent meaning. The perlocutionary effect of utterances involving jubilation (fairs, dates, etc.) contradicts the relevance of the perlocutionary effect of the final utterance. For these locutions to be relevant, they must be intended to effect $\vdash \downarrow B(p)$, of which H is most concerned. Since $\vdash \downarrow B(p)$ has a non-relevant psychological effect in light of the prior utterances within the domain, H’s only inference to relevance is the recognition of S’s hesitant attempt to veil and “soften the blow.” Formerly stated: For H, the initial rupture in relevance occurs at the level of the “literal” (Searle) or the “prior theory” (Davidson); as in the case of the suggestion we examined earlier—to see Macbeth—and the response being, “I have to return some videotapes. Here, the linear code of discourse-continuity ruptures in the final utterance act: *“So, I talked to Human Resources this morning and I cannot clear you for maternity leave for the amount of time you requested.”* This locution is non-relevant in juxtaposition to the domain. H’s awareness of this fact prompts an inferential-operandi that leads to an understanding of S’s uniquely intended “speaker meaning” (Searle) or “passing theory” (Davidson). The logic of speech acts reasonably translates to the macro-level of discourse speech phenomena. Now, the entirety of the dialogue seems to house a latent, expressive, unlike individual indirect speech acts which do so singularly. *S’s ultimate goal is omnipotence—total control; to utter an assertive without uttering an assertive.*

Using the concept of conversation (or at least something greater than isolated bits), we can begin to represent indirect speech acts, and speech acts in general, in a way that accounts for their place, direction and cooperation in actual conversation.

We know that perlocutionary effects cannot, in themselves, constitute a different illocutionary point for any one indirect speech act. But the question remains, can this be the case for a domain in the context of conversation—in a wide scope? *If we define the parameters of a domain within a dialogue as expressing one primary perlocutionary effect, that set of illocutionary acts within the interval can be said to mean more than their individual utterances (emergent effect); specifically, because of their contribution in creating a parallel-parametric-background from which*

¹⁶ Searle, John R. *Expression and meaning*. 34. “Step 2: I assume that Y is cooperating in the conversation and that therefore his remark is intended to be relevant (principles of conversational cooperation).”

the greatest perlocutionary act is embedded and from which it expresses itself. Subsequent to P₁'s utterance, P₂ recognizes that P₁ intended what was stated and did not intend what was stated (i.e., all utterances except the last of course); what remains in terms of meaning, that reflects any accuracy of actual intention or material consequence, is purely perlocutionary. *We are not undermining a constitutive theory of meaning, but allowing perlocutionary effects a larger semantic role in the emergent case of wide domains.* All locutions preceding $\vdash \downarrow \mathbf{B}(p)$ are posited for the creation of a different psychological milieu. If the phrase, "Blue Yummyacks" had the perlocutionary effect of contentment or jubilation, it could have been substituted for either speech act: "Molly and I attended the fair over the weekend," "I promise you, if you come next year, Pam, you won't regret it," or, "Ah, it's been a long morning already," and still maintain the integrity of the speaker's intention. This conclusion further supports our *first hypothesis* from earlier; namely, the hearer (P₂) will perceive as primary, and response-demanding, the illocutionary point of the most highly constrained utterance; i.e., the most binding expression for the hearer. And by extension of our *second hypothesis*, the variables surrounding the most constraining term, are the least constraining and may be easily substituted. In a wide scope it would appear that we are witnessing indirect perlocutionary acts through most of those utterances, whereby the speaker erroneously attempts to change the perlocutionary effect that $\vdash \downarrow \mathbf{B}(p)$ would ordinarily have by way of surrounding it with other expressions that possess the actual desired effect. *The hearer is confronted with a set of speech acts collectively and emergently affecting a parametric-perlocutionary-background-gestalt from which she discovers the primary intended point of the dialogue.* Our discovery is, specifically, a system under which perlocutionary effects play a much larger role, semantically, than Searle had realized at the micro-isolable level.

Therefore, we might represent this indirect discourse in a dialogical domain in the following way (substituting each speech act for variables in Greek and using the notion of "primary value" to distinguish the inherent literal meaning from the intended meaning of the speaker):

$$|\{\alpha, \beta, \gamma, \delta\} | \vdash \{p(\alpha, \beta, \gamma, \delta), [\delta]\}$$

To the left represents the literal domain (or what Davidson refers to as "prior theory"); to the right represents the primary domain (Davidson's "passing theory") and accounts for the sub-set

of perlocutionary-centered meanings on $\alpha, \beta, \gamma, \delta$, acknowledged by both S and H $p^{17}(\alpha, \beta, \gamma, \delta)$. The bracketed unit represents the most highly constrained speech act in the set, which corresponds to the “primary domain point” of this interval of the speaker’s dialogue. The turnstile outside represents its pervasiveness over the domain and its ability to extend across it, as in the case of example a. (the response “Very well, sir” invariably corresponds to the most constrained speech embedded in the middle of the speaker’s utterance; therefore, its power is linearly dominant). More importantly, this template tells us that the hearer will be responding to $[\delta]$, regardless of any other illocutionary points in the set or other perlocutionary effects from other terms in the set. Conversational contexts can be most easily accounted for by using some similar notation which tracks segments of time aimed at the expression of a singular domain point (i.e., analogous to the illocutionary point of a speech act, but represented here as the point of a specific dialogical interval of time). For example, it would be an impediment to interpretation were we to continue the series to include the speaker’s later reply in the same conversation, after the hearer’s response. Undoubtedly, this next interval of time will be guided by another domain point, of which surrounding speech acts, preceding and succeeding, may or may not play an indirect role on the semantics of the most constrained speech act. In cases where there exists a segment of conversation that is indirectly oriented around a constrained illocutionary act, this generalization may prove useful.

Co-extensively, we can now answer the issue raised in example a. (how does P_1 know that P_2 ’s response is to the middle-term and not the latter?) with the same model:

P_1 : “*Good morning, Pam! Remember, regarding those letters, the courier always leaves at noon. Looks like we’re going to meet our projections.*”

P_2 : “*Very well, Sir.*”

$$= | \{ \alpha, \beta, \gamma \} | [!]{ \alpha, [\beta], \gamma \}$$

¹⁷ The “p” stands to be distributed amongst all items in the parentheses. This algebraic law of distribution is used for the sake of brevity. This scheme is borrowed from the notion of “bound pronouns,” found in any introductory text on linguistics.

In the previous example the most highly constrained illocutionary act was the assertive, given the perlocutionary effect it entailed on the hearer (of which the other variables were attempting to effect an opposite perlocutionary act collectively). This case is much simpler. The middle-term is in constraint brackets because its power to extend the domain, as the domain's primary point, is based on the perlocutionary effect attached to it as an indirect speech act.

$|\vdash (p) |!(p)$ is the most constraining because it targets a future act on part of the hearer: $!\uparrow W(H$ does A).

VII. Conclusion

When examining Searle's arguments in relation to speech acts, indirect speech acts and the taxonomy of illocutionary acts, it is unavoidable (and many have agreed) that one become partial to the notion that—these are *ideal cases* (what I refer to as “isolated bits”); more often than not, we do not start from a null, default-position. The contention of this paper is that our linguistic way of life more closely resembles the scenario I've postulated and similar extended models. Searle himself recognizes the shortcomings of speech act theory, but more work needs to be done in wider contexts of conversation. In the same way that the study of collective behavior (sociology) effects conclusions in psychology (and vice versa) in vastly different ways...so too, we will discover that speech acts, analyzed in their collective assemblages and in more complex conversational contexts, may be used in many different ways and exhibit deeper semantic structures than we had initially predicted.

At this point, a reader might think, “. . . So, this is all great, but does your formula actually express a recursive, general theory, constitutive of the *necessary and sufficient conditions of possibility* on all dialogical utterance?” No. On this point I find myself partial to Davidson. A simple, future “passing theory” or malapropism may contradict my argument entirely. This is based on a much larger philosophical problem involving notions such as family resemblances and constitutive theories. The point here is that, just as Searle recognized overlap in the illocutionary acts and the impossibility of establishing absolute answers to every kind of taxonomic classification, I too am faced with the conclusion that we have not developed an absolute, standard rule. Early on

I emphasized the importance of speech act theory's usefulness. It might be the case that language will always be evolving in some way or another; that these meanings slip through our fingers and avoid thematic understanding altogether. If we are going to continue to strive for a general theory that incorporates all potentialities of speaker meanings and literal meanings, we need to invest a larger amount of energy in a more pragmatic direction that is amenable to the largest amount of inclusivity.

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